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No. 188.

# AUNT MAGGIE'S WILL

A Comedy in Three Acts

BY

ELIZABETH GALE

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## AUNT MAGGIE'S WILL.

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### Characters.

JANE SCOTT, a practical young person.

PRISCILLA PARSONS, irreproachable.

BESSIE THORN, irresponsible.

MADELINE GRAY, engaged.

MINNIE WELLS,

JULIA WATSON,

HENRIETTA CLARK,

MAY BELL,

} willing to be.

MRS. SIMS, a competent housekeeper from Peachville Centre.

DELIA, an incompetent one from Ireland.

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## AUNT MAGGIE'S WILL.

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SCENE.—*A room in the home of BESSIE THORN. A kitchen shower for MADELINE is in progress. MINNIE and JULIA have already come and are seated about a table toward the right of the stage showing their gifts to BESSIE. To the left, at the back of the room, is a door through which the girls enter.*

BESSIE (*examining the dainty little apron trimmed with lace and ribbon which MINNIE has brought*). Oh, isn't this dear! And pink is so becoming to Madeline. I am so glad you did not think, because this is a kitchen shower, that you had to bring one of those ugly things that most people wear. I would hate to see Madeline in one. Did you make it yourself?

MINNIE. Yes, all but basting it together. Mother did that for me for I was so puzzled when I saw all the little pieces—the strings, ruffles and the rest. What did you bring, Julia?

JULIA (*unwrapping a very fancy cushion*). All of the kitchen chairs I have ever seen have been so hard and uncomfortable looking that I have made a cushion so that Madeline will have at least one inviting place to sit in her kitchen. Don't you think it is pretty?

BESSIE. Indeed I do. It is perfectly sweet. Madeline will be delighted with it, I am sure. And this is what I am giving her (*displaying candlesticks with elaborate green shades*). Kitchens are such hot places, you know, and green throws such a cool, pleasant light.

MINNIE. Aren't they just darling!

JULIA. Perfectly dear!

BESSIE. I think they are, too, and I hope the girls will all bring pretty things. I am going to put every-

thing on this table. (*She rises and begins to arrange them.*)

(*Enter HENRIETTA.*)

ALL. Hello, Henrietta!

HENRIETTA. Hello, girls!

BESSIE (*embracing her*). Oh, you dear thing! Whatever made you so long? Here we've been waiting and wondering. And say, what did you bring?

HENRIETTA (*showing her gift*). I brought this tablet for memoranda. See, I put this big green bow on it partly because it looked pretty and partly because I could hide quite a large satchel in each of the loops, and you know it is so nice to have satchel in the kitchen—that is I should think it would be—to counteract the odors of cooking. When I get married I am going to have dozens in my kitchen.

BESSIE (*taking the satchel from MINNIE and JULIA who have been admiring it*). Weren't you clever to think of it! And see, the green ribbon just goes with the candle shades. (*She places it on the table with the other things.*)

HENRIETTA (*going to the table*). Oh, aren't they dear! Who——

(*Enter MAY with a big bundle in her arms.*)

MAY (*breathlessly*). Oh, girls, I thought I would never get here! And say! It began to sing in the street car. Let me put it down somewhere. No, it is not heavy but it is such an awkward thing to carry. (*She sets it down on a chair.*) And its name is Euliphilli!

ALL. What!

BESSIE. Who's name? What is it?

MAY (*taking off the wrappings as the girls crowd about her*). The little darling's name, of course. It is a canary. Say, wouldn't you like to have one like him in your kitchen? Isn't he dear? And you ought to hear him sing!

JULIA. Isn't he cunning! Shall I put him on the table with the other things?



BESSIE. Please do. Isn't this going to be the finest kitchen shower you ever saw! Every one is bringing such delightful gifts.

(*Enter PRISCILLA with an immense parcel.*)

ALL. Oh, hello, Priscilla!

PRISCILLA. Good afternoon. Isn't this a beautiful day? Aren't we having fine weather for this time of year?

BESSIE. Fine. But say, Priscilla, what did you bring?

PRISCILLA (*handing her parcel to BESSIE*). I brought a flowering plant. It is advisable, you know, to make our surroundings as attractive as possible and——

ALL (*as the plant is unwrapped*). Oh-h-h!

BESSIE. How sweet!

MINNIE. Darling!

JULIA. Dear!

HENRIETTA. Perfectly lovely!

MAY. Where did you get it, Priscilla, at the new florist's on the corner of First Street? He has beautiful things.

MINNIE. But won't it take up a lot of room in the kitchen?

PRISCILLA. If Madeline takes my advice she will have a large airy kitchen. It is one of the most important——

(*Enter JANE.*)

JANE. Hello, girls!

ALL. Hello, Jane!

JANE. Here's my donation. (*She hands her package to BESSIE who unwraps a frying-pan and puts it on the table with the other gifts with an air of great disappointment.*) What you can't use is of no use, is my motto. (*Going to the table.*) Is this the shower? It looks to me more like a fancy table at a bazaar than a kitchen shower.

MINNIE (*aside*). Wasn't she horrid to bring such an ugly thing!

JULIA (*aside*). But people use frying-pans.

MINNIE (*aside*). Yes, but brides don't want to think about them. I wish I dared hide it under the table.

JANE (*finding a comfortable chair*). Where's Madeline? Hasn't the guest of honor come yet?

BESSIE. No, she is very late. I don't see what can keep her. (*They all seat themselves.*)

MAY. Maybe she is writing to Mr. Randolph. She writes to him every day, you know; she told me so.

HENRIETTA. Have you met him, girls—Mr. Randolph? I met him last week and he certainly is stunning.

PRISCILLA. And they say he is clever too.

JULIA. They say he has money too.

JANE. What a remarkable man!

BESSIE. Oh, girls! Did you know that Susan Moore and Will Henry have announced their engagement?

PRISCILLA. Impossible!

MINNIE. Gracious!

JULIA. Really!

JANE. Poor Billy!

BESSIE. Oh, Jane, aren't you mean! Susan is just as sweet and dear as she can be.

JANE. Of course she is, and pretty too, but she doesn't know anything, poor child!

BESSIE. Doesn't know anything! Why, she can speak French and German and sing beautifully and paint some—and——

JANE. Oh, yes, I know all that, but it will not help her to get poor Billy's dinner.

MAY. Well, Billy might hire a cook.

JANE. Yes, Billy might if Billy had the money.

MINNIE. Jane, you'd spoil anybody's romance. (*JANE shrugs her shoulders as they all turn away from her with marked disapproval.*)

MAY. Have you seen the latest addition to Madeline's trousseau? It is a rainbow chiffon wrap and it is the sweetest, dearest thing you ever saw. Some one sent it from Paris. She does not know how to put



it on yet but it certainly is the loveliest thing in the world.

(*Enter MADELINE.*)

ALL (*rising*). Madeline!

BESSIE. What has kept you so long, dear? Where have you been?

MADELINE (*sinking into a chair*). Let me get my breath! I have walked so fast. Girls, what do you think!

BESSIE. Oh, we can't think—tell us.

MADELINE. Well, it is certainly the strangest thing you ever heard of.

MAY. Yes, I am sure it is. Go on.

(*They all settle themselves but draw up closer to MADELINE.*)

MADELINE. Well, just I was getting ready to come here, who do you think called?

ALL. Who?

MADELINE. Mr. Scribbles!

ALL. Mr. Scribbles!

MADELINE. Yes, Mr. Scribbles, the lawyer, and what do you think he wanted?

BESSIE. What?

MADELINE. He wanted to tell me that Mr. Randolph's Aunt Maggie was dead.

JANE. Isn't that too bad!

JULIA. I am so sorry!

BESSIE. Will it postpone your wedding?

JANE. When did it happen?

MADELINE. I don't know, but the important part is that she left a will.

MINNIE. A will, gracious!

MADELINE. Yes, and the will says that she leaves all of her money to Freddie—If——

ALL. What?

MADELINE. If he married a competent house-keeper!

ALL. A housekeeper!

BESSIE. How perfectly ridiculous!

MADELINE. Isn't it?

BESSIE. Why, she must have been crazy!

MADELINE. No, Mr. Scribbles says she was not, and he seems to think that she showed a lot of good sense in the matter.

JANE. So do I.

BESSIE (*reproachfully*). Jane!

MADELINE. And he says that if Freddie marries a girl who can not keep house she leaves every cent she has to an orphan asylum. Think of it!

MAY. But of course you can keep house, Madeline, so it will be all right.

MADELINE. Of course I can and I told Mr. Scribbles so, but he said that the will stated that he must assure himself of the fact, and he began to ask me what I could do.

JANE. Well, what did you tell him?

MADELINE. I told him I could make tea and a rarebit, and charlotte russe, and a lot of nice little things.

MINNIE. You make the most delicious fudge I ever tasted, Madeline, didn't you tell him that?

MADELINE. No, I forgot that.

JANE.—What did he say when you told him about the other things?

MADELINE. All he said was "Ahem!" And then he asked me if I knew how to clean house—sweep and dust and scrub and things like that.

BESSIE.—The horrid man! And what did you tell him then?

MADELINE. I told him that Mr. Randolph would never think of allowing me to do such things.

HENRIETTA. Why of course he wouldn't. Just fancy the wife of a stunning looking man like that getting down and scrubbing the floor!

MADELINE. Yes, think of it! That's what I told Mr. Scribbles, so he said that perhaps I need not do the actual work myself but it would be necessary for me to know how to do it so that I could direct the

servants; and he asked me what I would do if were house cleaning time.

JANE. And you told him—?

MADELINE. I told him I would hire a washwoman.

PRISCILLA. A washwoman! What would you hire a washwoman for?

MADELINE. Why, to wash the windows and floors and—and—do the cleaning.

BESSIE. How clever of you! I never would have thought of it.

MADELINE. And then he asked me what room I would clean first and I told him the hall because that is the first thing you see when you come into a house, and then I would clean the cellar because you always begin at the bottom and go up. You see I had reasons for everything I said, and he had to admit that they sounded logical.

JULIA. So it is all settled then, he is satisfied?

MADELINE. No, he isn't. That is the funny part of it.

MINNIE. I don't see what more he could want. Surely you answered him well.

MADELINE. He said he would like to see my theories put into practice, so I am going to hire an apartment and keep house.

MINNIE. } Good!

BESSIE. }

MAY. How lovely!

PRISCILLA. That will be perfectly ideal.

BESSIE. You will let me come and help you, won't you?

MADELINE. Of course you can come and help if there is anything to be done. I expect you all to come and visit me anyway. But I haven't told you all yet. Mr. Scribbles decided that he did not know anything about housekeeping after all, and that it would be better for him to send some one experienced to do the inspecting. So, Mrs. Sims, a friend of Aunt Maggie, who lives at Peachville Center, is coming to visit me so that she can tell him that everything is all right.

MAY. Peachville Center! Way off there in the country! We will show her what housekeeping is! I have been reading in the magazines all about the latest ideas for arranging the table. We must have her for luncheon the first day and we'll have the decorations in pink and green. I saw the sweetest plan for a pink and green luncheon in last month's Ladies' Magazine—you have all the things to eat in pink and green too.

MINNIE. Won't that be lovely!

HENRIETTA. I think perhaps she will get some new ideas on housekeeping before she goes home.

JANE. Yes, I wouldn't be surprised if she did. Girls, if you will let me give you a bit of advice——

HENRIETTA. Please don't, Jane. I know from the way you have behaved this afternoon that you would throw cold water on the whole scheme.

JANE (*rising*). Well, if I can't talk I may as well go. Good-bye, girls. I wish you luck with the house-keeping, Madeline. Good-bye!

ALL. Good-bye!

(*Exit JANE.*)

MINNIE. Jane means well, I know, but she isn't always very agreeable.

HENRIETTA. No, she never will enter into our plans and I sometimes wonder how she ever got into our set anyway.

BESSIE. When will you start, Madeline?

MADELINE. Just as soon as I find a place.

PRISCILLA. In the meantime, Madeline, I shall collect all the useful bits of knowledge on the subject I can find for your perusal.

MAY. Well, your kitchen is all furnished.

BESSIE. Oh, yes! I forgot this was a shower. (*Rising*) Behold your kitchen furniture!

MADELINE (*going over to the table*). Aren't they all perfectly lovely?

MAY. All but the frying-pan. Wasn't it mean of Jane to bring such an ugly thing? But then, Jane always does do the unexpected.

MINNIE. I am going to put it under the table, for now that Jane is gone it cannot hurt her feelings and it just spoils the other things.

BESSIE. Do you know, I think it was just perfectly lovely for Mr. Randolph's Aunt Maggie to make a will like that. It gives a little—er—*spice* to your engagement.

MADELINE. Yes, and whatever happens afterwards, Freddie will always know that I am a good house-keeper—for I will have proved it.

### CURTAIN.

---

### ACT II.

SCENE.—*The dining-room in Madeline's apartment. To the right of the stage is a table, to the left a couch. In the background, to the left is a door leading out into the hall; to the right another door leading into the kitchen. The room is in great confusion and MADELINE, PRISCILLA, HENRIETTA and MAY are trying desperately to put it in order while MINNIE and JULIA are setting the table.*

MAY (*pausing in the act of dusting a chair*). Isn't it perfectly lovely, Madeline, to be in your own home? (*Circulating with the duster.*) There is such a sense of freedom!

MADELINE. Y—yes, but there is a sense of responsibility too. I wish we had started a week ago to settle. I had no idea how much work it would be. It is good of you girls to come and help me. But, oh! It is not anywhere near time for Mrs. Sims yet, is it?

HENRIETTA. Oh, no! of course not. Don't you worry, Madeline, we will get everything done in time, won't we, girls?

MINNIE. Of course we will. There, isn't the table pretty? I am sure the luncheon is going to be a success.

MADELINE. I do hope so, but I begin to wish that I had done a little experimenting before I asked the lady. Delia, you know, came only a few hours ago, and it seems to me she needs a little training. I have told her very carefully, though, how to serve things and I think it will go all right.

MAY. This pile of old books doesn't look very nice here on the table, what shall I do with them?

MADELINE. Oh, anything you don't know what to do with just throw under this couch.

*(MAY takes the books and shoves them under.)*

HENRIETTA. What are you going to have for lunch, Madeline?

MADELINE. First we are going to have tomato bisque. Delia said she did not know how to make it, so I got it canned. Jane told me to—she 'phoned this morning to see how I was getting along. And then we are going to have salmon salad on lettuce leaves. I got two dozen cans of salmon for I wanted to be sure to have enough. That is two apiece for each of us—counting Delia—and some left over. I think that will do, don't you?

MAY *(rolling up an apron and throwing it under the couch)*. Oh, I think that ought to be enough salmon, but aren't you going to have anything else?

MADELINE. Yes, I am going to have some frogs' legs. They are green, you know, and this is to be a green and pink luncheon.

MINNIE. They are green when they are alive, but are they when they are cooked?

MADELINE. Well, I don't know why they wouldn't be. I don't see how cooking would change their color.

MINNIE. No, I don't see how it would either, but I had an idea that maybe it did. See? Don't you think these flowers are better a little lower? It is so much more sociable when you can look across the table at your neighbor.



(*Enter BESSIE with her arms full of bundles which she drops on the table.*)

BESSIE. There is the bread and butter and pepper. But say, Madeline! I got only half a pound of pepper. When I told the man I wanted a pound he asked me if I really meant it, so I said I guessed a half a pound would do, and he looked the queerest you ever saw and said he guessed it would. Here it is; do you think it will be enough?

MADELINE. Oh, I—I hope it will. But it doesn't look like very much, does it?

MAY. It will do for to-day anyway and then you can easily get more.

HENRIETTA. I am going to throw this old cushion under the couch too. (*Throws it under*) It doesn't go with the color scheme a bit.

(*Enter DELIA from the kitchen. She is very untidy and sets a plate down on the table roughly.*)

MADELINE (*startled*). Delia!

DELIA. Yis, m'am.

MADELINE. Please try to do things a little more quietly. And, Delia, when you serve luncheon I hope you will not come in with your kitchen apron on like this, will you?

DELIA (*twirling her gingham apron behind her and displaying a white one under it*). I'll do so, m'am, and whin I stand before yer yer'll be none the wiser fur phat's behind me.

MADELINE. I'd rather have you leave the gingham apron in the kitchen. Did you fix the pink and green ribbons on your cap as I told you to?

DELIA. Yis, m'am, and it's a grand headdress I'm after havin'. Begorry, it would do fur me weddin'.

MADELINE (*motioning toward the bundles BESSIE has laid on the table*). You may take these out to the kitchen, Delia.

DELIA. Yis, m'am.

MADELINE. You may go now.

DELIA. Yis, m'am.

*(Exit DELIA.)*

MADELINE. Do you think she would be offended if I told her to comb her hair?

PRISCILLA. It is my theory that one should treat a servant as one would like to be treated. Now, would you like a stranger to tell you to comb your hair?

HENRIETTA. But Madeline's hair never looks like Delia's.

PRISCILLA. That is not the point—but the principle is the same in both cases.

MADELINE. Well, I am glad you think it is not the thing for me to do. I was dreading it, but I thought it might be my duty.

*(All start as the bell rings loudly.)*

MADELINE. Can it be Mrs. Sims!

JULIA. Will Delia let her in all right?

MADELINE. Oh, I am afraid so, and just look at this room!

BESSIE. But the parlor is all right and you can entertain her there until we get things in order here.

*(Enter DELIA by the hall door.)*

DELIA. There's a woman at the door, m'am.

MADELINE. A lady, Delia. Did you show her into the parlor?

DELIA. 'Deed an' I did not. I stood her fininst the door and, sez I, "Don't yez move a fut 'till I come an' give yez laive." Garry jinny! m'am, did yez think I'd put her in the parlor to run off wid all yer grandeur?

MADELINE. Oh, what will she think of us?

JULIA. I am just as excited as I can be. *(Throwing things wildly under the couch)* Hurry, girls! Give me everything that's lying around. This is the quickest way to get rid of them.

(*All but PRISCILLA begin to pick up things and throw them under the couch and hide them about the room.*)

PRISCILLA (*thoughtfully*). I would not call my state of feeling excitement; I would say rather, that I have a great foreboding as if some terrible disaster were near.

DELIA. And it's right you are, m'am, for I hear it coming as fast as its two feet will carry it along.

DELIA *goes out by the kitchen door. The hall door opens suddenly and MADELINE screams as Mrs. Sims enters and plants herself solidly before it.*

MRS. SIMS (*to MADELINE*). I disapprove of nervous women.

MADELINE. I am sorry, Mrs. Sims, but you startled me—you——

MRS. SIMS. I surprised you. Yes, I know it. I meant to. I'm here inspectin' housekeepin' and the way to inspect thoroughly is to take the housekeeper by surprise. Seems to me you have plenty of help here.

MADELINE. These are just friends who have come in to lunch with me. Let me introduce the girls, Mrs. Sims.

MRS. SIMS. Oh, we don't need any introducin'. All I need to know is their names and I guess I can find that out by askin'. (*Turning to MINNIE*) What's your name?

MINNIE. My name is Minnie Wells.

MRS. SIMS. And yours? (*She points to each in turn and they respond with their names.*) Any of you married?

ALL. Oh, no.

MRS. SIMS. Going to be?

MAY (*giggling*). I hope so, some day.

MRS. SIMS. Are you engaged?

MAY. Dear me, no!

MRS. SIMS. Got a beau?

MAY (*with an attempt at dignity*). I don't know what you mean, Mrs. Sims.

MRS. SIMS. Well, if you don't know what a beau means you ain' goin' to be married for some time yet. (*Turning to PRISCILLA*) You got a beau?

PRISCILLA. Certainly not.

MRS. SIMS. Certainly not! Well, I guess you must all be calculatin' to stay old maids.

(*DELIA enters from the kitchen and motions to MADELINE.*)

MADELINE. Well, what is it, Delia?

DELIA (*aside*). There's nothin' to make tay in, m'am, but a fryin'-pan.

MADELINE (*aside*). What else do you want?

DELIA. Sure, m'am. Yis, m'am. It's grain that I am, m'am.

(*Exit DELIA.*)

MADELINE. Won't you let me take your hat, Mrs. Sims?

MRS. SIMS. No, thanks. I won't take it off. It sets real comfortable. It's too bad you should have so much company on wash day.

MADELINE. This is not wash day.

MRS. SIMS. 'Tain't wash day! Ain't that your wash woman? you don't mean to say it's your hired girl?

MADELINE. Yes, it is.

MRS. SIMS. Well, I never! I thought you was keepin' house yourself.

MADELINE. I am directing the housekeeping. Mr. Scribbles and I decided that it was not necessary for me to do the menial work myself. I understand that I am to know enough about it to manage a household, and I have asked you here to show you that I am quite capable of doing it. (*DELIA enters.*) You may serve lunch, Delia.

DELIA. Yis, m'am. (*She starts to go out, turns back*

*and whispers to MADELINE, then goes out shaking her head.)*

MRS. SIMS (*seating herself with her back to the table and taking out her knitting*). I'll jest knit a row while we're waitin'. I never set idle, and let me tell you, if that's the way you all do—set around doin' nothin' this way.—(*she glances about disapprovingly at the girls who are trying to appear at ease*) 'tain't any wonder to me that you ain't got any beaus and don't know what they mean. Land sakes! when I was a girl—But, what with their washin' machines and trolley cars and all sech like, times do change and I suppose there ain't no use talkin'. But I ain't forgot how to keep house yet, though, and folks are jest as crazy about my bread an' pies an' cake as they were then, an' there's jest as many as would like me fur their housekeeper. I could have been married time and again more than I have but I didn't want to be greedy with so many old maids in the world. Give everybody a chance, sez I, whether they'll take it or not. And when you've had three husbands, and all of 'em as different as mine, I say that's enough matrimony for one woman. Never—the—less and not—with—standing, if you are a good cook and housekeeper you'll never wait long to find out what a beau is, and you'll know just as well—providin' you keep your hand in—when you're sixty as you did when you was sixteen.

(*DELIA has, in the meantime, been putting on the table whole heads of lettuce, cans of salmon, a loaf of bread and a pound of butter in the box as it came from the store; also she has put two immense bows of pink and green ribbon in her untidy hair.*

DELIA (*coming forward*). That's the thruest word yer ever spoke, m'am, and sure it's Delia Malony as knows it. In the ould country there was niver a gir-r-l what could bile praties wid meself, and it's many the lad comes courtin' me. Ah, it's well I mind the times I've had, m'am. And one day, m'am, I was goin' wid Patsy McMannis to the fair—ha, ha! It was this

way, m'am. We was ridin' wid a crate of chickens in the cart—and finer hens was niver raised—when shouldn't they bust open the crate and off they goes over the bog and Patsy after 'em Ha, ha, ha! When I thinks of it now! Patsy wid his coat-tails flyin'—ha, ha, ha!

MADELINE. Delia, you forget yourself.

DELIA. 'Deed an' I do, m'am, whin I think of Patsy an' how he looked leppin' over the bogs, ha, ha, ha! But it's Delia, now, m'am, that wasn't far behind him.

MADELINE. Delia, I wish you would continue to serve the lunch.

DELIA. Yis, m'am. And I'll tell yez the rest while yez ate it.

*(Exit DELIA to kitchen)*

MADELINE. I am perfectly astonished at her!

MRS. SIMMS. Are you? Well, I am perfectly astonished to see somethin' stickin' out from under the couch. Looks like it might be somebody's best bonnet. *(She gets up and pulls it out.)* Well, I swan to gracious, if it ain't! And books and pictures and aprons and coats, and land knows what all. Stuffed as full as a roasted turkey. *(She pulls them all out into the middle of the room and then goes about looking behind and under things, gathering here an apron, there a duster or a newspaper and throwing each onto the pile, talking all the time.)* Well, I never hear tell of sech a thing—under the couch and behind the pictures. All flowers and fuss before your eyes and rags and dirt and untidiness in the corners. My, my, my! How long did it take you to put them away? Jest look at it all now! I didn't know there was hidin' places enough in one room to hold it all. *(Pointing tragically to the pile.)* Look, look! Is that what you call good housekeepin'?

*(Enter DELIA.)*

DELIA. Yez can come ate now. *(Goes out at once.)*

*(They all exclaim as they catch sight of the table.)*



MADELINE. Oh, dear! How could you!

MRS. SIMMS. So that's what you're goin' to have for lunch is it? One, two, three—ah—h! nine cans of salmon! You must think we have dainty little appetites. Is that all you have in the house?

MADELINE (*missing the sarcasm*). Oh, no. I have two dozen cans. I knew better than to run short.

(*Enter DELIA.*)

MRS. SIMMS. Yes, I guess you did, and we're goin' to eat it all out of the cans. Well, it will save dish-washin' and that's somethin' to be said for it.

DELIA. 'Deed an' it is, m'am. But I hope it's yez as can open 'em for it's more than I can do wid the strength of me two arms. (*Laying hatchet on the table.*) I borrowed this and may be it will help yez out.

(*Exit DELIA.*)

MRS. SIMS. Well, I guess we'll let that salmon sleep peaceful in its cans, but as far as I can see there ain't nothin' else to eat but elligance and dirty lettuce. Humph! (*To DELIA who has come back with the frying-pan full of tea*) What yer got there?

DELIA. Sure it's tay, m'am.

MADELINE. Oh, Delia, how could you! Isn't this mortifying!

DELIA. 'Deed an' it's that, fur it's yourself as told me to do it, and it's not the first queer thing you've said this day.

MADELINE. But I didn't mean——

DELIA. Faith, an' there's no tellin' phat yez mean, m'am, wid yez grain frogs' legs and yer decorations to match, an the bows yer stick on me head till I feel like a cockatoo. Sure an' it's not long I'll be stayin' wid the likes of yez. (*To MRS. SIMS*) An' wad yez believe me, m'am, there's narry a thing in the kitchen but a canary bird, a flower-pot, a fryin'-pan—an' meself, m'am.

MADELINE (*sobbing*). You're a horrid—impudent—ungrateful c-creature and you c-can g-go at once.

DELIA. Sure an' I can that, an' it's glad I am to be laivin'.

*(Exit DELIA slamming the door.)*

MRS. SIMS. Well, I guess I've seen all I need to and there 's nothin' left for me to do but tell you what I think—which won't take long. What I think is jest this: *You ain't goin' to marry Freddie Randolph.* I knew his Aunt Maggie good. She could keep house if she did have money, and she set proper store by her housekeepin'—she didn't call it *menial work*—and she would raise right up and hant me if I let Freddie marry any one who did like this when she had used him to what was right and proper. Good-bye! I'm goin' right out to find somethin' to eat and the railroad station, and I'm mighty glad I didn't stop to take off my bonnet.

*(Exit MRS. SIMS through the hall door.)*

MADELINE *(throwing herself down on the couch)*. Oh, Freddie, Freddie!

*(Enter JANE and finds them all weeping.)*

BESSIE. Isn't this dreadful!

JANE. It certainly is. I never saw so many tears all at once in my life.

MADELINE. Oh, Jane, do you know?

JANE. I met the inspectress in the hall so I can guess.

MADELINE *(sobbing)*. I have lost Freddie. Oh dear, oh dear!

JANE. Well, I wouldn't feel so bad about it.

MADELINE. Bad about it! It will kill me!

MINNIE. You are an unfeeling wretch.

JANE. Not at all. I have just come to pour oil on the troubled waters of your domestic life and show you a ray of hope.

MADELINE. I don't see any hope for m-me.

JANE. And you never will while you keep your eyes full of handkerchief and your mouth full of tears. *(A*

*brief pause broken only by sobs.*) I went to see Mr. Scribbles to-day.

MADELINE. D-don't t-tell me anything about him. He is r-responsible for all of this.

JANE. Don't be too hard on the poor man; he is going to give you another chance. I foresaw this catastrophe and thought of a plan to set things right again. Mr. Scribbles agrees and it only remains for Madeline to approve and go to work.

MINNIE. Go to work!

JANE. Yes. My plan is simply this, that you, Madeline, take a course in domestic science. You would learn to cook and keep house and to manage servants. I think I would keep this apartment, if I were you, for practical work, and when you find from experience that your housekeeping is satisfactory, ask the lady again.

MADELINE. I don't ever want to see her again.

JANE. Oh, you will change your mind about that.

MADELINE. Do you think I could ever learn?

JANE. Of course you could, but you would have to postpone your wedding for it would take you at least a year.

MAY. Well, better late than never.

MADELINE (*tragically*). Oh, Freddie! I haven't lost you after all!

(CURTAIN).

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ACT III.

SCENE.—*The dining-room in MADELINE'S apartment. A year has elapsed since the last act and the room shows great improvement in housekeeping. The table is set simply but daintily for two. As the curtain goes up MRS. SIMS and MADELINE enter by the hall door.*

MRS. SIMS. No siree! You can't shet me off in no parlor when I come on an inspectin' trip. I told you

that before. I want to be right on the spot and see how you do things. (*Looking around.*) You seem to be some tidied up since I was here last.

MADELINE. Oh, yes, Mrs. Sims. I have learned a great deal since then.

MRS. SIMS (*looking under the couch*). Yes, I see you've learned somethin'. (*She goes about examining things.*) Yes, yes, yes—you have learned somethin'. No dust on the chairs, no dust on the table—everything in pretty good order. (*Seating herself.*) Set down and let me talk to you. You have learned somethin' about cookin', too, I hear. What can you do, can you roast meat?

MADELINE. Oh, yes, indeed!

MRS. SIMS. Fry potatoes and make pie and cake and biscuit and rolly-polly?

MADELINE. Oh yes, I can do all of these things, and I can fix lobster à la Newburg and beef à la mode, and bake the most delicious casseroles, and make ten different kinds of ice cream. And have you learned to make Zuppa di Magro? That is something quite new. No? You don't know? Well, I will show you if you care to learn. I hope you are going to make me a nice visit this time. Won't you take off your bonnet? You must not leave without your lunch to-day.

MRS. SIMS. N—no, I don't know as I will. I kinder have a presentiment.

(*Enter MINNIE from the kitchen. She is dressed as a waitress and puts something on the table and goes out.*)

MRS. SIMS. You've got a new hired girl, I see. Well, she's enough sight better than the other one. How does she work?

MADELINE. She works very well, thank you. You see she is not really a hired girl; she is one of the girls you met here before. I have been teaching them as I learned myself. Henrietta and Julia are cooking for me to-day and are eager to show you how well they can do it.

MRS. SIMS (*untying her bonnet strings*). Well, I guess I'll stay a while—my presentiment's leaving.

MADELINE (*ringing a bell*). May will take your things.

(MAY, *dressed as a maid, comes in, takes MRS. SIMS' bonnet and goes out again.*)

MRS. SIMS. The girls ain't very sociable since they learned housekeepin'. Don't they never talk?

MADELINE. Not when they are acting as maids. It is not proper for them to.

MRS. SIMS (*stiffening*). Humph!

(*Enter MINNIE from kitchen.*)

MINNIE. Luncheon is served.

MADELINE (*showing MRS. SIMS to her place.*) Won't you sit here, Mrs. Sims? (*They take their places and MINNIE passes the croutons.*)

MRS. SIMS. What's them?

MADELINE. Croutons.

MRS. SIMS (*disapprovingly*). Croutons! Never heard of 'em. No, I don't want any. Take 'em away. What kind of soup do you call this any way?

MADELINE. This is bouillon.

MRS. SIMS. Humph! Sort of thin stuff I call it without any vegetables into it. Does Freddie like it?

MADELINE. I believe he does.

MRS. SIMS. Well, I don't. You can take it away. Never heard of serving soup in cups anyway. What else have you got? (*MINNIE removes the bouillon and brings in the second course.*)

MADELINE. Did you have a pleasant trip this morning, Mrs. Sims?

MRS. SIMS. Oh, so—so.

MADELINE. Perhaps you would like to go shopping with me this afternoon.

MRS. SIMS. I don't know as I am going to stay that long, my presentiment is coming back.

MADELINE. I thought you were going to stay a week.

MRS. SIMS. I was, but I don't feel jest comfortable. What's this I'm goin' to eat now?

MADELINE. This is Venetian Halibut.

MRS. SIMS. Humph! That don't sound tasty. How do you make it?

MADELINE. You flake the halibut and then bake it with carrots and celery and green peppers and a little lemon juice.

MRS. SIMS. Why, that ain't nothin' more nor less than baked fish fixed up fancy. I guess I can eat some of that. And creamed potatoes! I know them when I see 'em but I guess I wouldn't if you called 'em. Now what's this she's givin' me?

MADELINE. Tomato à la Homburgh.

MRS. SIMS. Land o' Goshen! If you called a Peachville Center tomato a name like that it would rise right up off the plate. That baker's bread?

MADELINE. No, I baked it myself this morning.

MRS. SIMS. You did! Well, I must say it ain't so bad.

MADELINE. Will you have some more of the Venetian Halibut?

MRS. SIMS. No, thanks; don't know as I will. It sounds so foreign that I can't eat it in peace. Do you know how to fry beefsteak?

MADELINE. I can, yes, but I prefer to broil it.

MRS. SIMS. Oh, you do hey?

MADELINE. Yes, it makes it more tender.

MRS. SIMS (*to MINNIE as she removes this course*). So you have learned to cook too, I hear.

MINNIE. Yes, madam. (*Exit.*)

MRS. SIMS. Well, I must say her manners ain't improved any with all she's learned. If you'll give me a cup of tea now, I'll be going.

MADELINE (*in dismay*). What! Hasn't the luncheon been a success?

MRS. SIMS. Maybe it has, *but* I ain't used to this kind of success. I like good plain straight house-keepin' without any frills, but when folks begins to put on airs I, for one, can't stand it. Here I can't eat a



mouthful without I ask what it is and I say that ain't a comfortable way to do. Give folks honest meat and potatoes and make 'em good and keep your house clean, says I. Who does more puts on airs and I ain't got any use for it. (*As MINNIE puts a showy mould of ice cream before her.*) What's that?

MADELINE. That is the ice cream. I made it myself and I do want you to taste it.

MRS. SIMS (*rising*). You expect me to spoil it by eatin'! That would go plumb against my conscience. Where's my hat? I can't stand this another minute. Get me my hat.

MADELINE (*rings bell*). And—and c-can't I marry Freddie after all?

MRS. SIMS. Don't ask me. (*To MAY who enters from the hall*) Get me my hat. (*To MADELINE*) I don't know nothin' about it. You ask me to come here and inspect housekeepin' and you show me frills. I don't know anything about frills. You've got the place clean, I must say, and your frills seem to set good on you, but I say it again, they ain't becomin' to Lydia Ann Sims. (*Taking her bonnet from MAY and tying it on hurriedly.*) Thank you, m'am. No, m'am, you can't do nothin' else for me. I'm that flustered already with havin' someone at my elbow all the time that I've fair got the creebles. Good-bye, m'am. Freddie can marry you for all of me, but if he does after eatin' here he deserves anything that happens to him. Good-bye! (*She goes out, evidently very much agitated, and the girls come in from the kitchen.*)

MAY. Well, has she gone again?

HENRIETTA. Is it all over?

MADELINE (*triumphantly*). It is all over but the wedding.

CURTAIN.





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